

During the first years of the twentieth century, University of California archaeologist N.C. Nelson mapped shellmounds still present around the shores of San Francisco Bay. Nelson published his map in 1909, showing over four hundred shellmounds ranging in size from a few meters in diameter to tens of meters in diameter.

An act of desperation in the face of rapid change, Nelson's map was hastily made and lacks precision. It is however a stunning reminder of the inhabitedness of San Francisco Bay: Thousands of years of native peoples living in and changing San Francisco Bay.

Shell Mounds and Camps

- ▲ Camps
- Disappeared, Mounds
- ◐ Partially Present, Mounds
- Fully Present, Mounds

Nelson's 1909 Shellmound map. Over 400 mounds were plotted on this map



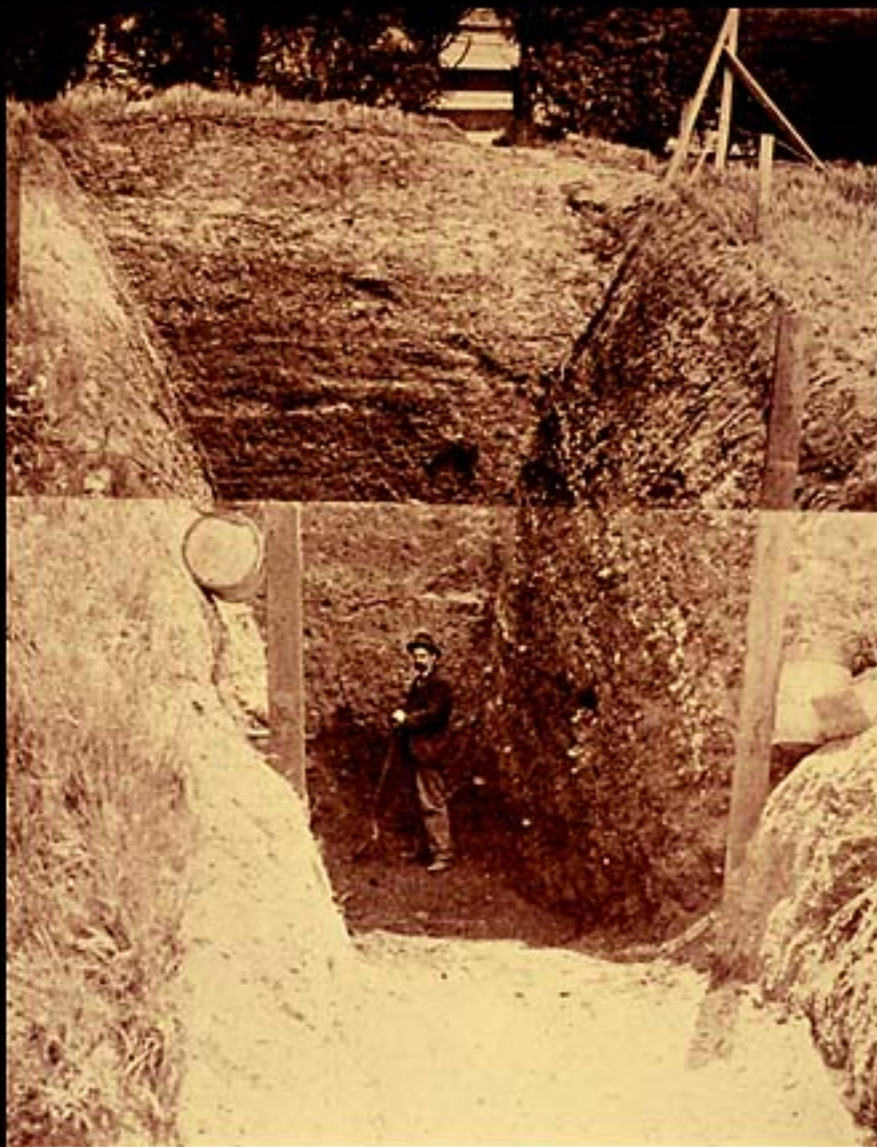
Nelson's mapped shellmounds in the Berkeley area.



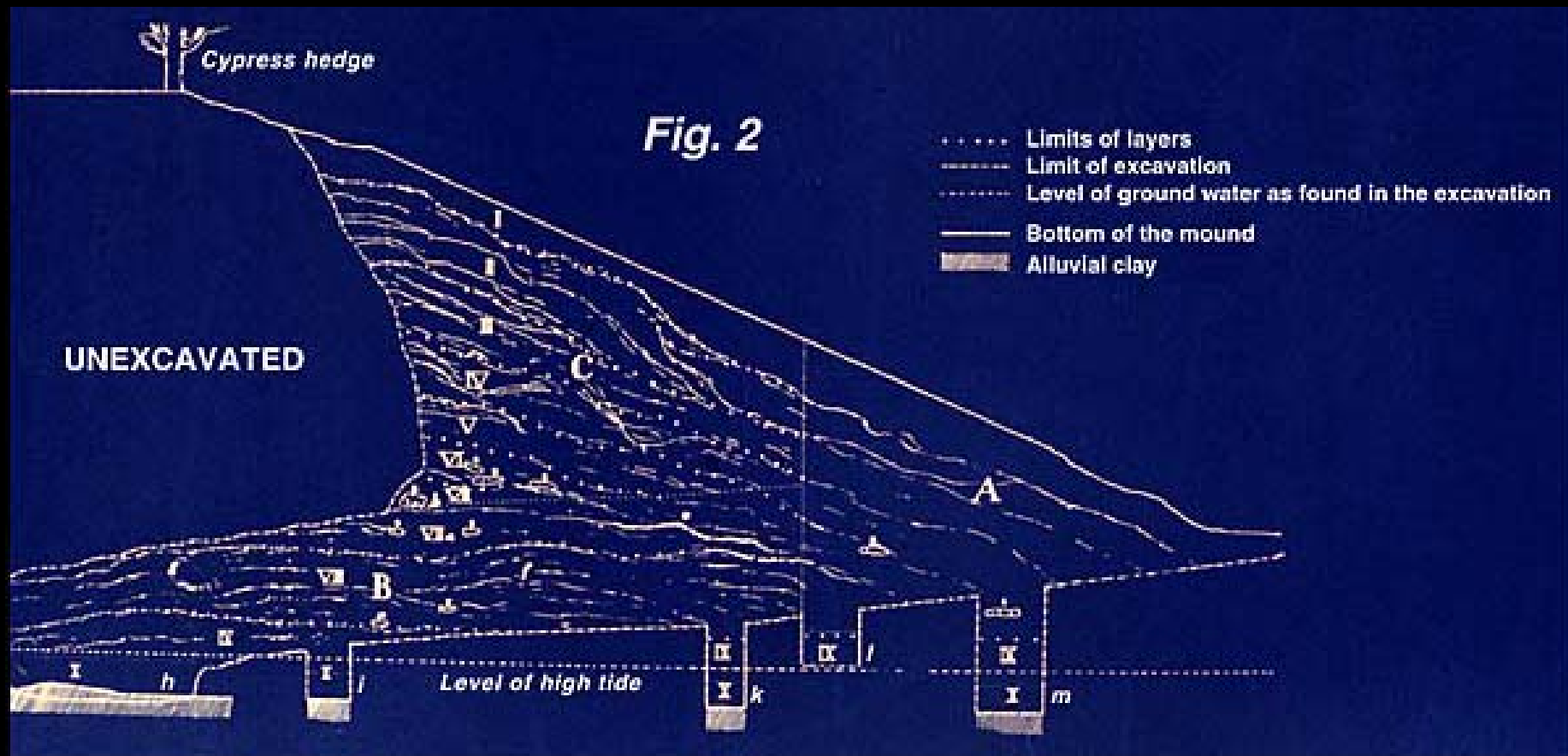
Partially destroyed West Berkeley shell mound as photographed
By N. Nelson, ca. 1900. This is number 310 or 311 on the previous slide.



The Emeryville Shell Mound in 1900. This was a public amusement park at the time and until the place was destroyed in the early 1920s to make way for industrial space. Note the building at the top right (with a sign painted on roof)...it sits on top one edge of the mound. There were bars and other places built on and around the mound.



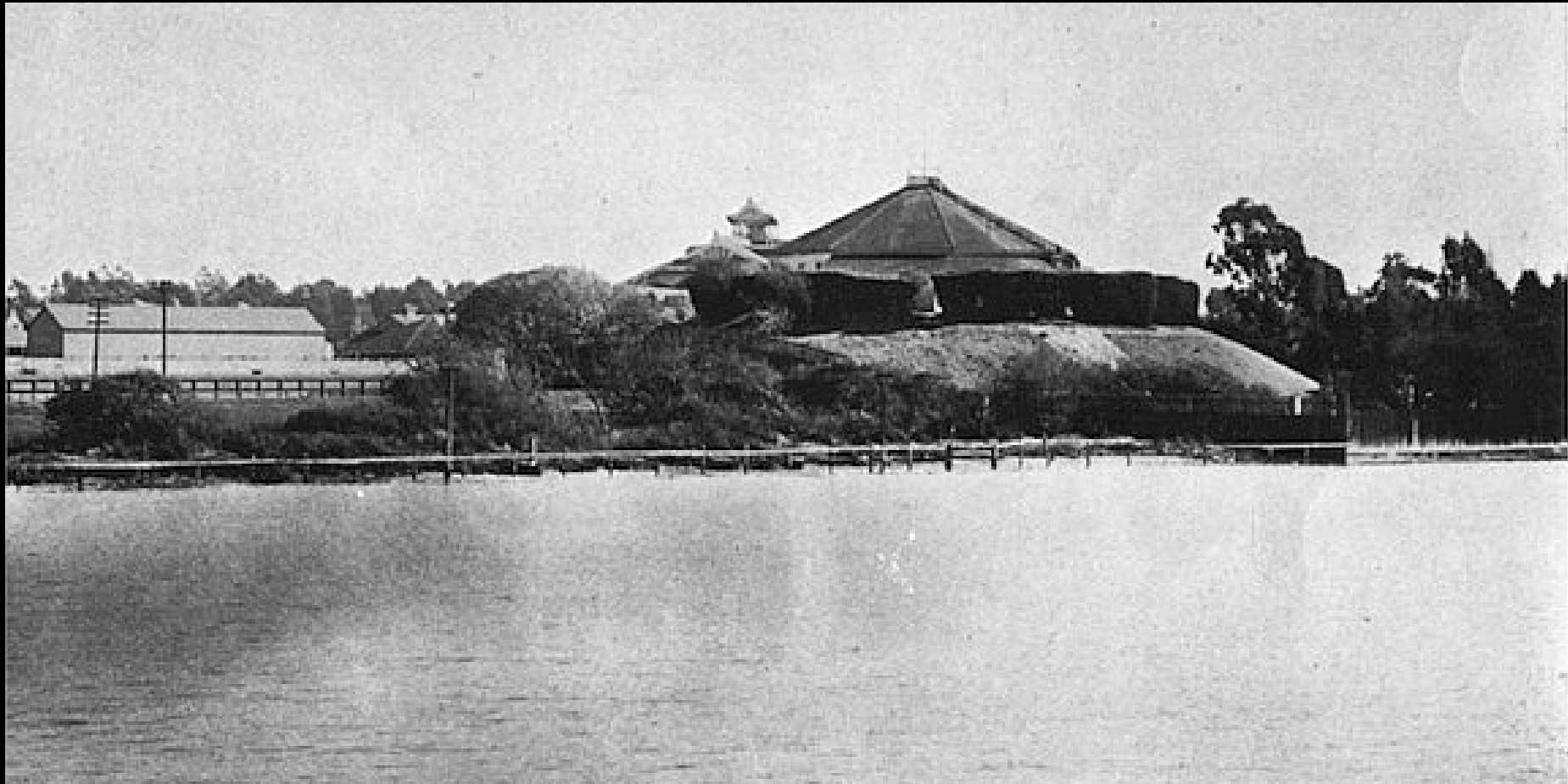
Emeryville Shell Mound during excavation by Max Uhle, 1907. This is a “small” cut into the accessible western edge of the mound, since most of it was covered by amusement park buildings and other facilities. Note diagonal layers of shell.



Max Uhle's stratigraphic profile of the Emeryville Shell Mound, 1907 excavations. Note diagonal layers (shell and other cultural material)



Typical stratigraphy of a Bay Area Shell Mound (not Emeryville). Note alternating layers of shell (and other cultural material) between layers of relatively sterile soil/clay. This is deliberate fill to raise the mound's Height. At least that's how it is often interpreted.



The Emeryville shell mound in 1907, prior to its destruction. Note waterside location. And in case you're curious, that's the Shell Mound Park "dance pavilion" on the top! Pretty sad.



The massive Emeryville shell mound being destroyed, 1924. Note the steam shovel off to the right.



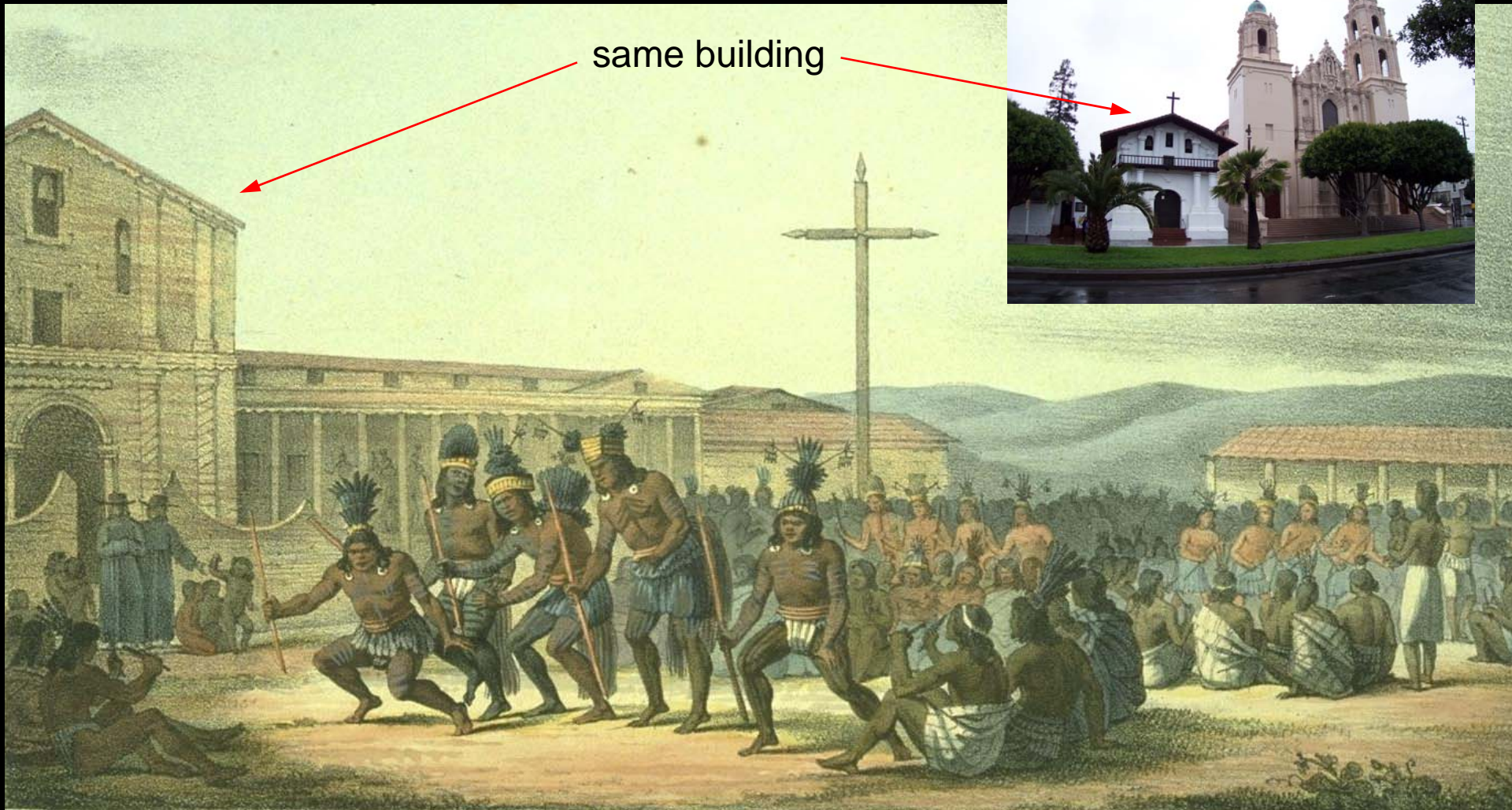
Another view of the Emeryville Mound leveling, 1924. Note the stone objects piled up at base of mound.



Shell Mound historical site, Bay Street, Emeryville. This is all that's left of The Emeryville site, and I'm not sure if it's even real. Probably not, but the Waterfall's a nice touch, no?



Another view of the Shell Mound historical site, Bay Street, Emeryville.



Ohlone peoples performing dance ceremony, San Francisco Mission, 1815
The main building on the left still stands in the Mission District of San Francisco.
The pavement of Dolores Street covers where these people once stood and sat.
Note the two priests at back left overseeing things.